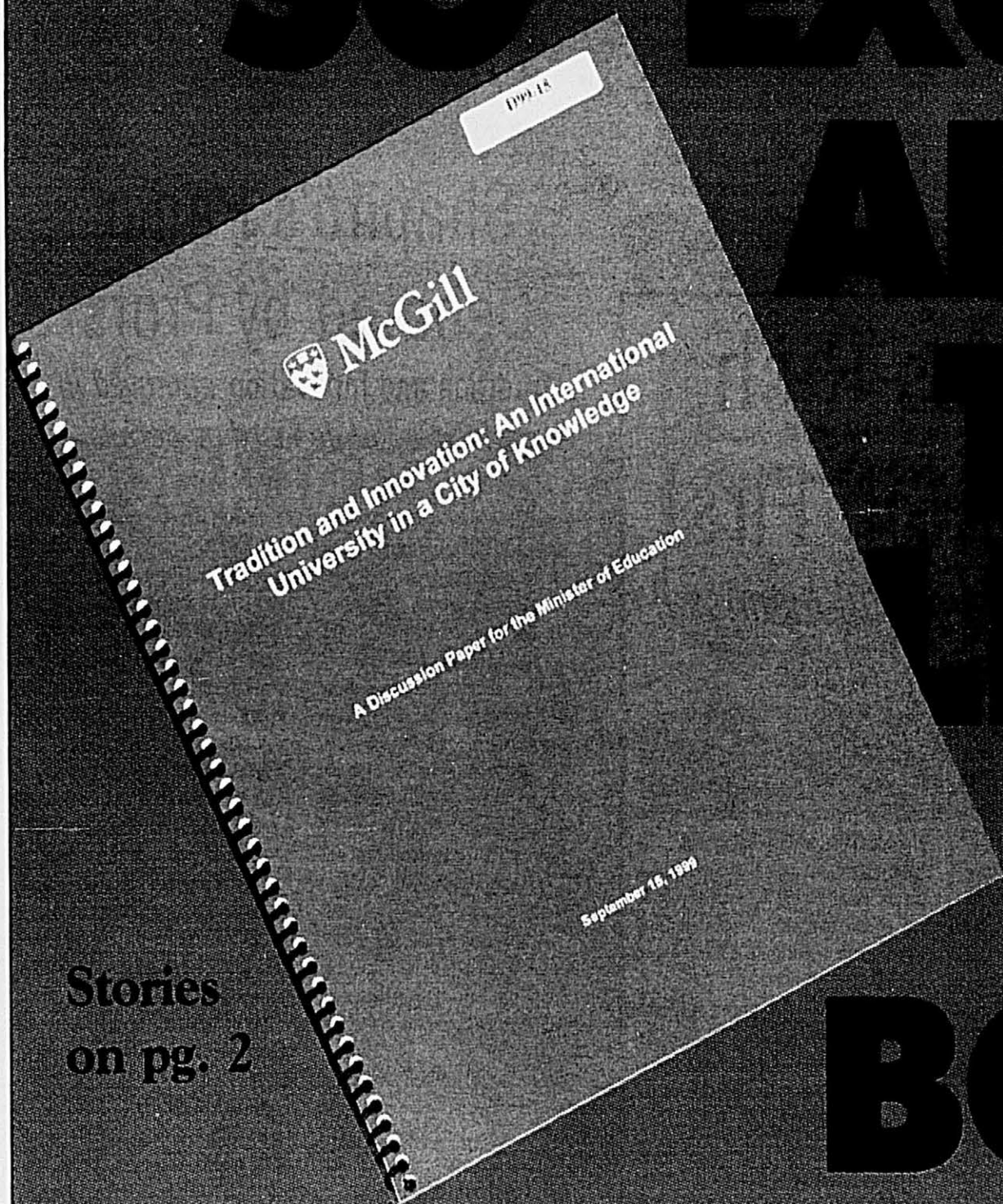


THE MCGILL DAILY

Volume 89, Issue 21 October 28, 1999
Reading between the lines since 1911

WHY IS
EVERYONE
SO EXCITED
ABOUT
THIS
LITTLE
RED
BOOK?



Stories
on pg. 2

NEWS—

The new face of the CBC: The Daily talks with President Robert Rabinovitch — pg. 3

CULTURE—

McGill Players' Theatre gets Closer to the meaning of love — pg. 10

McGill's Discussion Paper: the Student Take

Student Senators give mixed response to administration document at Senate

BY JON BRICKER

A show of qualified support for administration's *Tradition and Innovation* discussion paper was the message student leaders sent out at yesterday's Senate meeting. While student Senate reps said they supported the document's calling for reinvestment by Quebec, the meeting saw students and faculty airing their beefs with the document's more contentious points.

Differential tuition, internships, and the scope of the document were at the center of many senators' concerns at Wednesday's meeting. Administrators had hoped to gain some consensus on the document, which is to be revised and resubmitted to the government in the next two months.

"What's important for us students is accessibility," said student Law Senator Mathieu Bouchard. "We have to take into account that what's important for McGill's law school is to keep its diversity," said Mathieu about the Law Students' Association's response to the differential tuition proposal.

In its response, the Association warned against putting students in the position of having to seek high-paying corporate law jobs to offset the rising cost of completing professional degrees.

"It seems very narrow-minded," concurred LSA President Elizabeth Trent. She pointed to the work of recent Nobel Peace Prize winner Médecins sans Frontières as an example of the kind of low-paying humanitarian work that differential tuition discourages. But the extended discussion on differential tuition saw Senators

make a case for the initiative as well. Principal Bernard Shapiro offered little optimism that the debate would yield any changes to the call for a differential fee structure.

"What we could end up with is not a high, not a medium, but a low quality university unless we have money," Shapiro said, calling tuition hikes a necessary evil. He also noted that he saw little weight to the arguments that differential tuition jeopardized the notion of equity in accessibility. "It's not as though the status quo doesn't raise issues with distributive justice," defended Shapiro.

At least some dissension in the student ranks seemed evident as Medicine Senator Bill Stansfield called differential fees a potential solution to the current funding crisis.

"It's fair to ask everyone in medicine to pay more," said Stansfield at a Senate caucus meeting on Tuesday. "All of these people can afford to take out loans and pay more. My department is falling apart and the school needs more money," he said.

Stansfield echoed Medicine's support at yesterday's Senate meeting, though he added that differential fees would only be possible with a guarantee that professional program students paying the fees benefitted directly from a repaired financial-aid system.

Also at issue for student leaders was the discussion paper's emphasis on internships, with many saying the focus did not go far enough and others questioning the key role given to industrial partners in the document.

"There was a worry that the whole thing

is too vocationally oriented," Shapiro said. He added, "Internships are as appropriate to the public sector as to the private sector."

Student senators also raised concerns with the document's absence of initiatives to restore funding in core programs and reverse a trend of climbing student-teacher ratios.

"The whole thing seems like a list of vague promises," said Arts Senator Jeff Feiner at the meeting Tuesday where student senators prepared their message for yesterday's meeting.

But Shapiro defended the document, reiterating that it was just a work-in-process. "The point of today's discussion is to get as much feedback as we can," he said. "This document is a working document."

Xavier Van Chau, who heads the group of student senators, was optimistic that yesterday's forum will lead to improvements on the paper's more contentious proposals.

"I think that it will lead to a revised document," he said. "It went well, and I'm glad that students were able to participate in the discussion."

While the deadline for a final submission to the Ministry of Education is set for late next month, Shapiro said that he suspected the government would give more time, as it had missed its own deadline for a response to the first draft of the discussion paper, which called for an annual reinvestment in McGill of \$80-million. He added, however, that the longer the process takes, the less the likelihood that reinvestment in education will constitute a significant part of February's budget.

KEY POINTS OF THE *TRADITION AND INNOVATION: AN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN A CITY OF KNOWLEDGE* DISCUSSION PAPER

- An increase in academic staff in the area of information technology.

- The establishment of a centre for the development and application of information technologies to undergraduate studies in general and humanities programs in particular.

- Academic programs in the domains of genomics/proteomics, drug design and bioinformatics.

- The establishment of a national institute for theoretical physics based on the infrastructure of the mathematical research institutes.

- The establishment of a statistical analysis laboratory with special emphasis on the social sciences, thereby facilitating our participation in SSHRC and STAT CAN initiatives.

- An internship component to be developed where applicable with industry participation.

- That universities be allowed to set and keep differential (and higher) fees for highly restricted programs such as medicine and dentistry.

- That the government provides a greater number of scholarships and bursaries for graduate students, including increasing the quota of fee exemptions for international graduate students from 10 percent to 25 per cent.

- That the Ministry of Education fund post-doctoral students at a level equivalent to the operating overhead revenue allocated for other students.

The complete document can be found as a link on www.mcgill.ca.

Shapiro's Paper Debated by Profs

Tradition and Innovation approved in principle but opposed on details

BY BEN ERRETT

The official debate on the *Tradition and Innovation* discussion paper on McGill's future was held yesterday at Senate, and, with a few notable exceptions, popular opinion supported Principal Shapiro's plan for the university.

"The comments I have received so far have been generally supportive, but with some very specific concerns," Shapiro said.

"The most frequent comment [on the first section of the document] was on the perceived imbalance. Respondents felt that the stated commitment to the arts was not reflected in actual proposals," Shapiro said.

Both Shapiro and debate chair Patrick Farrell made attempts to defuse debate, the latter noting that the purpose of the debate was to improve the document, not simply "to throw stones."

Professor Samuel Neumoff was the first speaker in the debate on the document, and he was among those with the most to say.

"The corporate culture this document embraces is worrisome," Neumoff said.

"It's important that we serve both the community and industry, and that we reserve the right to monitor industry even when we form partnerships....I rue the day when a corporation includes their staff appointment as part of a contribution and we have to accept it."

Neumoff's fears regarding increasing corporate involvement in the university were compounded by the discussion paper's repeated references to corporate internships.

"There are many public, community and international organizations that also offer internships, and yet the focus was entirely on corporations. This shouldn't only be seen through the optic of corporate strata."

Another key speaker on the document was music Professor Michael DuBow, who expressed concern that McGill's marketability is being injured by the education cuts.

"McGill essentially sells its crest as a quality product, and like any product, we have to maintain its quality....We have to make sure that we don't end up [selling the university] like a pair of flare pants."

DuBow went on to note that action needed to be taken, but that he didn't know what that was.

"To paraphrase a famous quote, 'There are few places like what McGill was; there are many like what it is becoming'....I don't want McGill to become just another UBC."

After a half hour extension of debate, Dean of Science Alan Shaver concluded the session by congratulating Vice-Principal (Academic) Luc Vinet on his work on the document, noting that the response to the government by other universities was "pretty mundane" in comparison.

Law Suit Alleges Rich Kids Get into McGill First

Former administrator charges wrongful dismissal and broken admissions standards

BY JON BRICKER

A lawsuit by the former director of admissions put goings-on in McGill's admissions department under serious scrutiny this week, as she claimed wrongful dismissal after she said she was pressured to admit students from wealthier families who didn't meet basic admission requirements.

An article in the National Post broke the story on Tuesday, after longtime McGill administrator Peggy Sheppard recently filed the \$1.4 million suit with Quebec's Superior Court.

"[Ms. Sheppard] was frequently asked...to admit applicants who did not fulfill the minimum admission requirements as stipulated by the McGill University Senate-approved policies," Sheppard said in her legal claim.

In the claim Sheppard also said that she was wrongfully terminated in 1996, after the university failed to honour a 1987 deal that guaranteed her promotion to a

higher position after her role was renamed dean of admissions and the requirements for the post were made to include a doctorate. Soon after, Sheppard took a year off to complete her master's in education at McGill.

An arbitrator later sided with Sheppard's claim that the position finally offered her in 1992 was not senior enough. She turned down a directorial position in 1994 and soon had her benefits cut. Two years later, she was formally terminated, the university claiming she had failed to honour her employment contract.

The news raised ire around campus this week, as many questioned the influence that administrators, alumni, donors, and the athletics department had in getting "desireable" applicants to McGill, even when they didn't meet the necessary academic requirements.

"There's a running joke that if you

can't get in, you can just buy your way in," said Canadian Federation of Students Vice-Chair Elizabeth Carlyle. She added that while people should take heed of concerns raised by the suit, it's part of a larger trend in the post-secondary system that sees wealthy students given more opportunities than those without money.

"Students are being turned away who can't afford university," Carlyle said. "It speaks to the problem of elite institutions. What this really represents how fast accessibility is declining."

The university has refused to comment on the suit. They did, however, file a countersuit, claiming that Sheppard still owes some \$22,000 to cover expenses of a second arbitration process from which the university says she withdrew.

Scheduled to testify at the trial are Principal Bernard Shapiro as well as two past McGill principals.

Rabinovitch Optimistic About CBC Future

The Daily talks with new CBC helmsman and McGill BoG Chair Robert Rabinovitch

BY JAIME KIRZNER-ROBERTS

The empty position at the top of the CBC has finally been filled.

In two weeks, Robert Rabinovitch, Chair of the Board of Governors of McGill University, will become the President and CEO of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. A graduate of McGill himself, Rabinovitch was appointed to the CBC position last week by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. The position had been empty for several months and the appointment comes in the context of a CBC eroded by budgetary cutbacks and extreme administrative and political turmoil.

When the first round of cutbacks were announced in 1996, CBC President Tony Manera resigned immediately, declaring that the cuts made it impossible to fulfil the CBC's mandate to cultivate Canadian culture through public broadcasting. Rabinovitch is more optimistic, though, and plans to do what he can to make the CBC worth saving.

"When Mr. Manera resigned, he was making a political statement, which was very important, that the corporation was underfunded," explained Rabinovitch. "That continues to be the case, and you can only do as much as your money allows you to do. My hope is that there are ways of focusing the Corporation on what it does best, getting out of the things where it does

not do well, finding other means of generating income, reducing our expenses, getting more synergies, getting more and more departments in the organization to work together. The reality is that the CBC is a very large organization which may need to undergo some degree of significant re-engineering. I took the job because I feel that the organization can be more efficient," he said.

The CBC has been in a state of constant crisis since the early 1990s. A victim of the federal government's budget-slashing rampage, the CBC lost 30 per cent of its funding between 1990 and 1996, as well as 5,200 jobs. The corporation has faced the serious challenge of fulfilling its mandate to contribute to a shared Canadian identity in the face of such cutbacks. Foreign bureaus, such as those in Paris, Mexico City and Capetown, have been closed, and popular shows such as Ian Brown's *Sunday Morning* have been eliminated. Similarly, investigative reporting has been scaled back, with the CBC relying more strongly on foreign newswire services. At the same time, more emphasis has been put on developing programs that will attract advertising dollars.

"There have been horrendous cutbacks, not just on the CBC, but on the Canada Council. A lot of organizations

have been cutback and what we have seen is that a lot of cultural organizations have had to regroup themselves to be more market-oriented. And in some ways that's good," said Rabinovitch. "But in some ways that has resulted in much less risk taking. Risk taking is an important part of culture, it's an important part of programming. If you can't afford failure, then you don't take the risk, then your productions tend to be more towards the middle ground, for lack of a better term," he said.

But American networks, as well as Canadian private ones, have the middle ground covered. As the content of the CBC is forced to cater to "the middle ground" because of lack of funding, they may in fact face an increasing challenge to compete with other networks who specialize in slightly more benign programming. The ways in which the cuts will affect the development of Canadian culture, however, might not be immediately apparent. A declining quality of programming could instead result in a slow erosion of the faith that Canadians have traditionally had in the CBC, and perhaps Canadian culture itself.

As Canadians flock to American television networks as well as private Canadian ones with less of a commitment to Canadian



New CBC head Robert Rabinovitch

programs which appeal to a large part of the population. The beauty of a public broadcaster is that it has an income, it can take risks, it can do different things. It can achieve excellence in a way private broadcasters can only do with very large expenditures. It's got to show bottom line improvements. A public broadcaster, I believe, has to show - enhanced quality programming," said Rabinovitch.

content, the CBC now accounts for only 10 per cent of English-speaking viewers and 20 per cent of French speakers. The poor ratings are the crisis which Rabinovitch hopes to remedy. How he can get ratings up without compromising the CBC's objectives, however, remains to be seen.

"Private broadcasters have a mandate to make money, they're on the stock market, they have shareholders, they need to make a reasonable return on their investment. But in the process they also have to entertain. In order to get the audiences, you have to have

Rabinovitch has extensive experience in both the private and public realms. He was the deputy minister of communications for the Trudeau government in the 1970s and has recently served as executive vice-president and chief operating officer of Claridge Inc., which controls Cineplex Odeon Corporation and NetStar Communications. He is also active in several charitable foundations such as the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Canadian Film Centre.

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Student Apathy at McGill

Who's to blame...and why bother?

BY MEHREEN KHALFAN

Activism at McGill is certainly not dead, but trends of complacency are increasingly becoming a concern for many student leaders.

"This is a conservative generation," said Jeff Roberts, Environmental Coordinator for QPIRG McGill. "The form of dissent is changing. We're not going to see thousands swelling up on campus with placards, however it doesn't mean that they don't care, they just need to find other outlets for dissent...Student dissent is a lot

students should be able to start rallying around, but they don't seem to see any continuity between themselves and their community."

INEFFECTIVE STRATEGIES

Apathy could be a consequence of ineffective strategies used by student groups - for example, SSMU and QPIRG - to attract and retain interested students. In the case of QPIRG, many students either know

BSN, fed up with the subdued strategies of the SSMU, have turned to the Concordia Student Union for support.

"The BSN has already started working with Concordia, because they seem a lot more receptive and oriented toward the same kind of goals," said Alaga. "We already co-sponsored the Student Activist Conference with them two weeks ago, and they have notified us of their support, even in terms of money," said Alaga.

Alaga also feels that if SSMU took some kind of leadership role in activism, there would be more activities happening on campus.

"Traditionally, SSMU has not gone out of its way to be helpful. Concordia is a more community-oriented university. We're in a cautious relationship with SSMU as compared to the CSU, which says a lot about why there is so little activism," added Alaga. "Groups might be stifled," he added.

QUIET ACTIVISM

Wojtek Baraniak, VP Community and Government Affairs, was defensive of the SSMU position, asserting that while SSMU is there to assist students in their endeavours, it is not the place of SSMU to take an official position on certain issues. This, he said, is the main difference between the CSU and SSMU.

"The activism that we're involved in is the quiet activism," said Baraniak. "I think it's more effective, and I think that the majority of students would agree with me. It's very important to gain the respect of the people you're dealing with. I'm not ruling out protest, but all I'm saying is that there's a time and a place."

Baraniak also cited changing conditions and lack of awareness as explanatory of the decline in activism.

"Back in the 60s, tuition was very low, you were guaranteed a student loan; it was easy to go to school. Upon graduation you had a job, so people had a lot more time devote to other things. Priorities of people have changed. It's not that people don't care, it's that they don't have time and they don't know. This year, we are trying to focus more on communications and publicity. I have created an action wing of my committee to raise awareness and mobilize people."

For all the intentions of Baraniak and SSMU, some students continue to feel excluded.

"The individuals at SSMU seem friendly and receptive, but where its lacking is in terms of reaching out to the general student body, not just certain people," said Hilary Mercer, a UI music student.

"It seems like the people most influential in SSMU are those who hang out at Gerts."

"The activism that we're involved in is the quiet activism... I think it's more effective, and I think that the majority of students would agree with me."

more sophisticated than it was."

Akinwunmi Alaga, Political Coordinator for the Black Student Network, a SSMU-affiliated group, agreed that the dynamics and degree of student activism have changed over the years along with the political climate. But he does not want to generalize about the nature of the current generation's ideals.

"I'd be careful to characterize the whole generation as conservative," said

nothing about the organization or are alienated by its approaches.

"There's a self-righteousness that lingers from the 60s," said Roberts. "QPIRG should become more relevant to the general student body. I'd like to see them reach out and make an effort to draw in mainstream McGill students. There are a lot of bright people at the school trying to change things, they just need more forums to come together, more communications



Carrying placards and marching on the streets - why don't McGillers continue?

Alaga. "One of the main issues we're addressing is black student apathy, which seems to be part of a broader trend of apathy on campus. For black students in particular there are more issues than for the average student.

"We all have to face tuition hikes and education cutbacks, but for black students there's the problem of how cutbacks have slashed down the African Studies Program, and the failure of McGill to meet the standards of the Equity Employment program. These are some issues that black

with other schools - which is what SSMU should be doing - facilitating intellectual exchange.

"QPIRG is fortunate in that it provides people that outlet; it provides a chance for people to work together on real issues," Roberts continued. "Since they're autonomous of SSMU they can afford to take a strictly activist stance whereas at SSMU they have a balance of interests."

Some students feel that this supposed balance of interest leads to the neglect of activist groups. Student groups such as the

Car Skids, But No One Hurt



Celine Heinbecker

The driver of a Mercedes Benz skidded into the ScotiaBank on the corner of Metcalfe and Sherbrooke yesterday. Perhaps the driver was taking out his/her rage at the bank's high ATM fees?

Briefs

FACULTY LOSS ALARMING: VINET

Vice Principal (Academic) Luc Vinet expressed concern at yesterday's Senate meeting regarding the steady decline in numbers of McGill faculty.

"We're systematically losing faculty," Vinet said, "and it is a most alarming trend."

Vinet noted that losses were generally in proportion to the size of the departments. He noted that the number of full-time academic teaching staff had decreased to 1,263 from a high of 1,498 staff in 1993. Vinet noted that these worries were compounded by the fact that there were still more losses expected this year. - Ben Errett

LIBRARY CRISIS ADDRESSED IN REPORT

McGill's efforts to modernize and increase its journal holdings are confused and unfocused, according to Professor Martin Grant of the Senate Committee on Libraries. Grant presented the committee's annual report at Senate on Wednesday, and he stressed the difficulties that are being faced in increasing digital holdings of serials while simultaneously stopping the severe depletions of McGill's current holdings.

"We want more digital holdings than colloid [ink] smeared on wood pulp [paper]," Grant said.

Chief among the concerns of the committees was the issue of copyright. As Grant explained it, professors and researchers transfer copyright to the journals upon having their papers accepted. This benefits the journal while "limiting the dissemination of research." The plan proposed by Grant involves copyright retention, as is the current practise in the United States for publications of the U.S. government.

"The current system has us paying a lot for essentially editing services [by the

journals]. If we don't transfer copyright, then our professors will hold on to it."

Dean of Science Alan Shaver expressed concern regarding recent cuts to the serial collections.

"Our resources faced another 25 percent cut this summer, which has many professors shocked and dismayed...We will soon have irrelevant serial collections for any form of scientific research," Shaver said.

Grant responded by noting that the move towards computerized integration of resources should address the issue, though it was a long way from bearing results. - Ben Errett

MUMIA GRANTED STAY OF EXECUTION

Death row inmate and former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal has been granted a stay of execution 13 days after having his death warrant signed for December 2, 1999 by Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge. The stay of execution was granted by Federal Judge William H. Yohn and was sparked by Mumia's attorneys, who filed for habeas corpus relief within days of the death warrant being signed. Judge Yohn will also begin to review the habeas corpus petition outlining 29 separate constitutional violations that occurred in Jamal's trial. Although Mumia's life has been spared for the time being, he has yet to be afforded ample opportunity to sufficiently plead his case in a court of law.

A strong Free Mumia presence is still acting intensively domestically and internationally, not simply to evade the glorified murder of a political prisoner, but also to pressure the Pennsylvania government to provide Mumia with his say in a properly structured judicial framework. Short-term goals have been achieved, but this particular success will surely not cause a diversion of long-term objectives. -Tal Pinchevsky

National Boast

Conrad Black says his paper has changed the country: but for the better?

BY BEN ERRETT

Yesterday marked the first anniversary of the National Post, and as such, the paper was quick to celebrate itself. As Conrad Black said on CBC's This Morning yesterday, the Post has changed the country.

A true statement, if you look at how the words tax cuts, productivity and brain drain have been introduced ad nauseum to the national debate. The Post has pushed a number of other issues in its first year, several of which it isn't as ready to boast about. The repeated flogging of the dead horse that is the United Alternative comes to mind. The struggles of Reform made the cover of the first issue, and front page fodder for the next several months, even though it was essentially a non-story.

Also, the whole tone of the paper has often been downright snarky. Rick Salutin made the point best when he observed that the Post is simply mean. For instance,

Tuesday's story on former McGill admissions director Peggy Sheppard's lawsuit against the university splashed the headline "McGill admits unqualified students" above the fold, even though the accusation is a small part of the lawsuit and the alleged infractions all occurred before 1986. Stories on immigrants and minorities are routinely given this coverage, which always seems to lie just on the line between the actual story and a comment upon it. "Immigrants lack vital vaccinations" was one memorable headline, easily photocopied and pasted on a placard for a neo-Nazi rally.

The one occasion on which the paper seemed to realize that it was being a bit spiteful came in its announcement of Adrienne Clarkson's appointment as Governor-General. "Activists invade Rideau Hall" was the now infamous

headline, making Her Excellency out to be some sort of radical leftist as opposed to an established member of Canada's upper strata. Apparently aware that they overdid it, the front page on the actual installation was almost unbearably fawning. They even printed a two-page, annotated text of the speech.

Issues such as the opposition to a nuclear first-strike ban (according to Bloc MP Daniel Turp, only the Reform Party and the National Post opposed the sensible motion) and the publication of Judge John McClung's misogynist com-

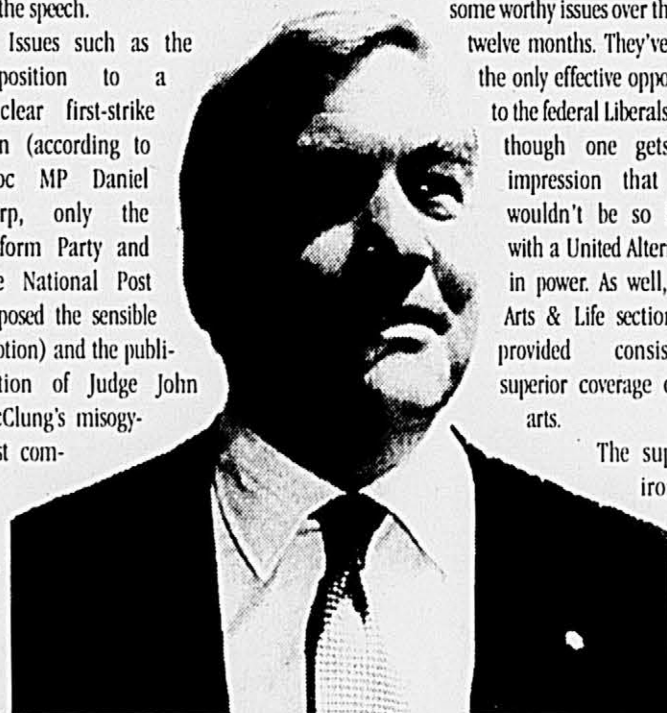
ments about women like Supreme Court Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dube being responsible for Quebec's high suicide rate were also conveniently omitted from Editor-in-Chief Kenneth Whyte's retrospective.

To be fair, the Post has raised some worthy issues over the past twelve months. They've been the only effective opposition to the federal Liberals, even though one gets the impression that they wouldn't be so harsh with a United Alternative in power. As well, their Arts & Life section has provided consistently superior coverage of the arts.

The supreme irony of

the Post's coverage of themselves was Black's declaration that the paper has added a new voice to the national debate. Actually, it really only amplified Black's voice, as already existed in The Gazette, the Ottawa Citizen and most other major Canadian dailies. If anything, the Post has helped homogenize the Canadian media. Aside from the CBC, the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail, Conrad and company have a grip on just about every media outlet in Canada. More than anything else, the concentration of print media in Black's hands is the true significance of the Post's launch.

As the clerk at the dep where I bought yesterday's issue said, "Keep that anniversary issue - it'll be worth something in ten years when that's the only newspaper around."



Slibel & Lander

Your forum for all the latest campus scoops

Tory frat boy Jaime Stein may have his sights on the next SSMU presidency. Watch out Wojtek! The thought of the two gelled-out rightwingers socking it out is appealing to some, and rather absurd to others. We'll refrain from comment...The Bottom Line, last year's SSMU Publication of the Year reported recently that the SSMU execs had given themselves a huge raise this year. Pretty outrageous, eh? Too bad it's not true. There is really no excuse for such poor journalism. In the real world, SSMU would probably sue The Bottom Line for libel. Way to go guys...Are you sub-standard? So, McGill's getting sued at last for throwing standards to the wind and lik-

ing the boys and girls of Canada's wealthy elite a little too much. Administration was mum this week on the far-reaching charges that pointed a finger at administrators, donors, alumni, and sports officials. It's sure to all come out in the wash though... Thanks to everyone who sent in all the delectable gossip. Keep it coming.

If you have any tidbits of hearsay or morsels of scandal, please forward them to slibel_landar@hotmail.com. We'll guarantee your anonymity and you'll have the satisfaction of knowing that you helped liberate a piece of gossip that just shouldn't have been contained.



On Track: SSMU President Andrew Tischler, for his ability to work absolutely any issue back to differential - no, "discriminatory" - tuition. The Tisch somehow managed to link the issue of discount airfare to the tuition debate while keeping his perfectly coiled head of hair intact. That's the Tisch we know and love.

On Crack: The Mercedes driver who thought Scotiabank had drive-thru service. The collision yesterday was clearly the work of a motorist on crack or some crack-related mind-altering substance. Dishonourable Mention: Jean Chretien, for his blatant lying about the APEC affair

Letters to the Editor

LESBIAN CLARIFICATION

I read your article on the Lesbian Helpers and was very interested in becoming involved. When I tried to e-mail them, I was notified that they do not have an e-mail account with the address you listed. I was wondering if you had any other way to reach them. Could you please let me know?

Thanks,
Sarah Hill

The new email address is lezbelp@hotmail.com

ECSTASY NOT USED BY ALL

Your article on ecstasy and raves was quite informative and insightful overall, but please try not to uphold stereotypes in the future. Drugs, ecstasy in particular, are indeed omnipresent at raves. Generally, though, mostly people who have difficulty changing their moods otherwise take mood-altering drugs (I don't condemn this at all).

Many ravers choose not to take drugs as they can alter their personal mood without them. You failed to interview any ravers who don't take drugs. In fact, several prominent DJs such as Josh Wink strictly refuse to take drugs. So in the future, please pay more attention to unveiling

false stereotypes such as that of the drug-addicted raver.

Juheto Corbeali

DAILY: NOW AVAILABLE IN 2-PLY

I cannot remember who first said it but it went something like this: "half the world has something to say but does not say it, the other half has nothing to say and keeps on saying it." It seems that lately the other half is gradually becoming part of the Daily content, as intelligent coverage of social and cultural issues makes way for gossip columns such as "Slibel & Lander" and rant columns such as "I have a mouth, so I must rant." It is sad and unfortunate to note that the Daily is increasingly becoming a good alternative to toilet paper.

Anonymous

The McGill Daily welcomes letters to the editor and comments from readers on the Commentary pages. Letters must be no more than 300 words, while Hyde Parks should be no more than 500 words. Letters can be arranged to be published anonymously, but the Daily must be aware of the writer's identity.

Drop your contributions off in Shatner B-03 or email them to mcgill-daily@hotmail.com.

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How the Web has changed our world — the internet celebrates its 30th birthday

BY JODI LATHAM

This month the internet celebrates its 30th year - another milestone for one of the most significant inventions of the modern world. Over the last decade in particular, the internet has almost single-handedly transformed the communication and information-technology sectors. It has revolutionized the way in which individuals correspond and has made it possible for people to instantly gain access to a vast array of information, from recipes to cyber-porn.

material that is sexual, hateful or violent in nature, or encourages activities that are a dangerous or illegal."

One definite concern is that because of the relative anonymity of email and chat rooms, there is a potential for people to pose as someone they are not. As Magid went on to point out, "In a few cases, pedophiles have used email, bulletin boards and chat areas to gain a child's confidence and then arrange a face-to-face meeting." To avoid such

a problem."

Students, of course, are not complaining. The internet has placed an enormous amount of specific and up-to-date information at their finger tips. This information is available almost right away and allows students to bypass hours of laborious searching and scribbling at the library.

At any given time, you can find dozens of McGill students glued to the screens of lab computers, reading and sending email, looking for information related to a course, or finding out more on a topic of interest. There is no denying that the internet has become an intrinsic part of university life. Students rely on it not only for information but also as a cheap and easy way in which to keep in contact with friends and family who live, not only in different parts of Canada, but across the world.

In fact, email is probably one of the greatest contributions of the internet to modern day society. It has revolutionized the way in which people communicate. "Email has provided an economical, ecological and faster way of communicating," said Toussaint. "If we want to save our planet and stop depleting forests, then the internet will no doubt replace the traditional mail system."

It certainly seems like the internet is the way of the future, particularly for communications technology. From its origins as a relatively basic network of computers, the internet has expanded into a communications phenomenon.

Not only has it enabled people to forgo the relative expense and time consumption of telephones and snail mail, but it has also opened up a myriad of forums for people to stay in touch. Want to meet someone new? Why not visit one of the many personal web pages, bulletin boards or chat-rooms which have surfaced all over the web? A quick search

more tales surface of couples who have met and married through the internet one is forced to wonder if our world is becoming a little too technological. Is it pervading our lives to the extent that we should start to worry?

MEDIA

One of the fields in which the internet has had the greatest impact is media. "It has provided us with a whole scope of research material that was previously difficult or even impossible to get a hold of," said Konrad Yakabuski, Montreal correspondent for The Globe and Mail. "It has also made finding sources and contacts anywhere in the world something you can



Jenni of JenniCam fame stuffs her face for the viewing benefit of her fans

on-line for everyone to see. You can find out about Wayne's trip to India, check out the intricacies of stomach stapling, or perhaps watch Jenni parade around her bedroom. It seems that if you have the concept, you've got an audience and anyone can be a superstar.

Yet, while millions can attest to the fact

“ The internet was started as a research project into interoperable and flexible data communications. I certainly don't think that any of us thought it would become the pervasive global communications system it is evolving into. ”

The first recorded description of a globally networked set of computers was written by J.C.R. Licklider in August, 1962. However, developing his basic idea of a 'Galactic Network' into the intricate, global 'web' that it has become was a lengthy process involving numerous changes. It wasn't until October, 1969 that the first host computer was connected. As Dr Barry Leiner, current director of the Research Institute for Advanced Computer Science commented: "The internet was started as a research project into inter-operable and flexible data communications. I certainly don't think that any of us thought it would become the pervasive global communications system it is evolving into."

As it stands, the internet has become a global phenomenon, and there are few people who haven't been influenced by its presence. Businesses have come to rely on the net for advertising and communication. Individuals now have access to a world of information from their personal computers. What has become clear is that the internet has an almost inexhaustible amount of uses and is expanding at an incredible rate.

Yet it is exactly this indiscriminate availability of information that is causing many people concern. With a little know-how and access to an internet browser, there isn't very much a person can't get a hold of. For adult users this may seem like heaven, but for parents this can potentially pose a number of problems. As Lawrence Magid said in his article on Child Safety on the Information Highway, "One risk is that a child may be exposed to inappropriate

dangers he advises that parents consider installing filtering features on their internet browsers, avoid posting photographs of their children on web-pages and supervise their child's activities on-line. In the U.S., the threat is being taken very seriously with the Children's Internet Protection Act introduced into the Senate in January of this year.

EDUCATION

The influence of the internet has now reached beyond the business world and home computers into the education system. Godfried Toussaint, a professor in the Faculty of Computing at McGill commented that the impact of the internet on the teaching and learning forum has in fact been enormous. "The internet has given students an edge for learning more quickly." He pointed out that it has made it easier for professors to demonstrate difficult concepts like the physical properties of motion, and has also made complex and current information available instantly.

The downside to the flood of information technology, said Toussaint, is that "it has made it much harder to teach." He went on to explain that before the rise of the internet, "If we [professors] gave problems to students, they often had to spend weeks in the library doing research. Now they can find the solution on the web instantaneously. It has made it difficult to determine whether a student has done the work themselves and means that we have to spend a great deal of time making sure the answer is not on the web before setting

“ At any given time, you can find dozens of McGill students glued to the screens of lab computers reading and sending e-mail, looking for information related to a course or finding out more on a topic of interest. ”



do within minutes. Before it could take days," he added.

Over the last year in particular, there has been a great increase in the number of news-based web sites, providing individuals with up-to-date information on world events. Yakabuski argues that this does not pose a threat to the existence of newspapers. "Newspapers in some form will undoubtedly continue to

that the internet has had a positive impact, there is a growing concern that it is jeopardizing individuals' privacy.

Professor Toussaint commented that, "Before the internet people were very concerned about Big Brother and the government gaining access to personal information. Yet now people seem willing to sacrifice all the freedoms they had fought for before." He predicted that people will eventually realize how much privacy they have lost and try to regain control although, as he puts it, "It may be too late."

Dr Leiner points out that, "It is inevitable that, with automation, more information about individuals will be available and be able to be integrated and consolidated." He went on to add, "As we become more sophisticated about such threats as well as the role of new technologies, such as encryption, we will develop means for dealing with it in an acceptable manner." Technology may be the problem, but it seems that it will inevitably have to be the solution as well.

Over the last 30 years the internet has evolved from the brain child of a few dedicated researchers into a multi-billion-dollar commercial business. It has revolutionized the world of communication and information and had an enormous impact on all levels of society. No one can really predict what the future is going to be for the internet. It could contribute to greater individual isolation or a more cohesive global community. Undeniably, at the incredible rate at which it is expanding, there is no doubt that it is going to play a major role for many years to come.

“ Before the internet people were very concerned about Big Brother and the government gaining access to personal information. Yet now people seem willing to sacrifice all the freedoms they had fought for before. ”

will provide you with hundreds of potential chat rooms from sports medicine to gays and lesbians to genealogy. Today, one thing is certain, if you have an interest, you will be able to find some other enthusiast with whom to discuss it.

The internet has become a tool to meet people across the world, to form friendships - and in some cases - even romantic relationships. As more and

exist," he stated. "The internet is more a source of information for people who use it in their work life whereas newspapers are a source of leisure or general information."

Yet it is not only conventional media which are undergoing change. It now seems that anybody with a computer and a camera can get their 15 minutes of fame through the internet. From web pages to entire sites, people are putting their lives

The Best of the Millennium

The Daily asks about engineering's greatest feats

To commemorate the advent of the new millennium, The Daily is taking a look at the best achievements of the past one thousand years. Each issue until the end of the semester will feature a poll of students and staff from a particular department or faculty. We'll ask them about the greatest accomplishments in their field and report on the results.

Our aim is to avoid the hype of the event, and instead provide some considered analysis as we mark the passing of an era.

This week, we put the question to members of the faculty of engineering:

"What is or was the greatest feat of engineering of the current millennium?"

The enormous scope of the question was acknowledged by most respondents. "Wow," "That's a tough question," and "I'll need to think about that" were common reactions. But when the answers came, they were an impressive document of some of humanity's noblest achievements.

We anticipated a range of replies from the broad and disparate fields that comprise engineering. And indeed, we got some. Student responses varied from the

printing press to the steam engine to magnetic resonance imaging. Their professors nominated optical fibres, the combustion engine, and the development of high-rise towers. Favour generally fell on recent technological inventions rather than older ones. Here is the final tally:

Students chose the advent of electricity as the millennium's greatest feat. The development of computers finished second, and the moonlanding a close third.

Among professors, the computer edged out the airplane and the transistor, both of which tied for second.

And the overall winner? The computer took it by a long shot.

History: The modern personal computer is just the most recent stage in a centuries-old evolution. Computing machines have ranged from the abacus, which may have been invented in Babylonia in the 4th century BC, to mathematician Blaise Pascal's mechanical calculator, built in 1642. In 1834, English mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage conceived of the Analytical Engine, a device that used punch-cards and was designed to be capa-

ble of solving any mathematical problem. Because of funding shortages, Babbage never built his machine.

It took until 1941 for a significant advance in computing. In that year, German engineer Konrad Zuse built the first general-purpose programmable calculator. It was followed shortly thereafter by the successful British code-breaking machine Colossus and an American ballistics computer, the ENIAC. After the first transistor was developed in 1947 and the integrated circuit and semiconductor were invented in 1959, computer engineering took off. The first commonly dubbed "personal" computer was the Altair 8800, which appeared in 1975.

Some thoughts from surveyed engineers:

• "They keep going up and up," said civil engineering Professor Shrivastava of high-rise towers. "This is a symbol of the advance in technology."

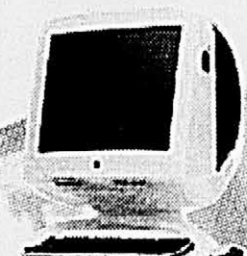
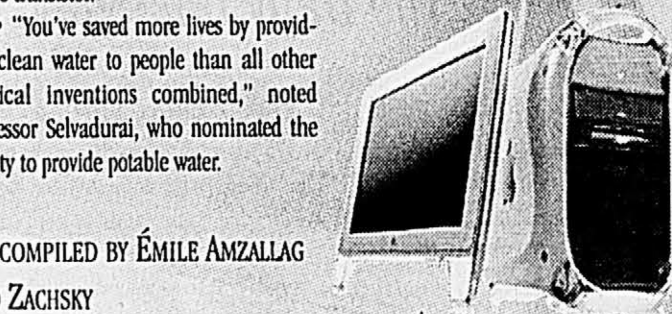
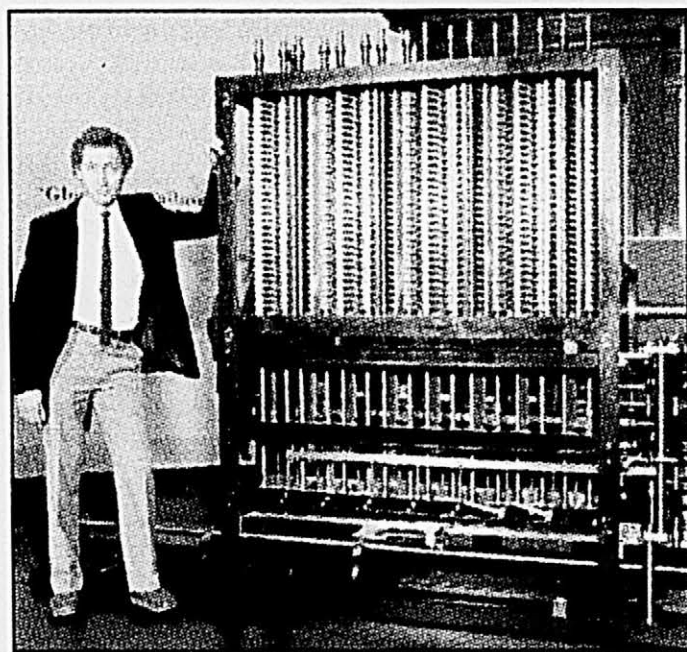
• "It's a very inspiring device," commented Paul Zsombor-Murray, professor of mechanical engineering, about the airplane. "It inspires people of all intellectual levels and talents....It flew in the face (pun intended) of scientific theory."

• "It's making our life today," said electrical and computer engineering's Professor Mourad El-Gamal, a proponent

of the transistor.

• "You've saved more lives by providing clean water to people than all other medical inventions combined," noted Professor Selvadurai, who nominated the ability to provide potable water.

—COMPILED BY ÉMILE AMZALLAG AND ZACHSKY



millennium poll

Today: the greatest engineering feat

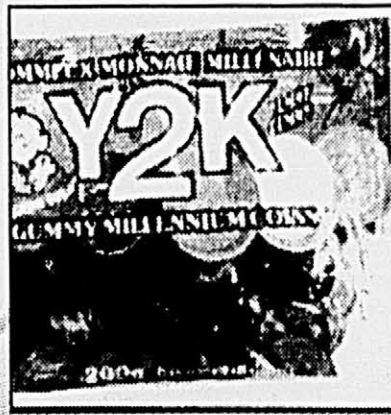
Next time: the greatest religious event

THE COMPENDIUM

It's the Millennium: Let's Get Stupid!

With the exception of The Daily's new Best of the Millennium feature (see this page), the advent of the year 2000 has been taken as an excuse for extreme lameness. Here are just a few samples:

• **Assorted products bearing the Y2K logo:** These Y2K gummies are indicative of the trend of desperate and pathetic products that try to profit from infectious millenni-



Monnaie du millénaire Y2K Millennium coins, 200 g

1.99

um fever. As you can see, a paltry buck \$1.99 gets you the multicoloured candy

millennium coins...and cancer from the red dye #40. What's next? These candies are so lame we can't even think of anything.

• **Millenni:** When it comes to lameness, the City of Toronto can be counted on as a dependable source for things overly quaint. Hence Millenni, the official Toronto mascot of the millennium. According to his web site, Millenni "is making command performances at events across the city." But the CN-Tower-headed, googly-

eyed behemoth looks more like a bipedal unicorn on Prozac. So what's the reason for inaugurating another fuzzy airhead? As the web site notes, "Nothing thrills like a character mascot!"

• **Yaklennium:** What is this? A millennium bash for furry Tibetan mountain-dwelling mammals? How can we get in on the fun?



Sadly, Yaklennium is merely two 12-page "special sections" of the Montreal Gazette that appeared in the last two weeks and were designed for students in Grades 4 to 8. So why the yak reference? The Gazette didn't say. But we do know that it was "special."

The Compendium is a bi-monthly collection of oddities compiled by the staff of The Daily.

Montreal Welcomes Back a Scrappy Bitch

The Daily talks to Veda Hille

BY JASON CHOW

On some highway in Northern Ontario between gigs, Veda Hille makes the call on her cell phone from her van. During a gruelling cross-Canada tour from Vancouver to Montreal, Hille is promoting her latest album *You Do Not Live In This World Alone*.

Her music is artsy but soulful, involving interesting cello and piano lines besides the standard guitar, bass, and drums. The four-string tenor guitar she uses gives a clean but full sound. Her versatile voice spans a wide range of pitch and emotion. Her songs range from slow piano-and-voice ballads to "college rock" (the lead guitarist from the now defunct punk band DOA plays with Hille).

A press kit describes Hille as "prone to 'artistic moods.'" But on this day, she's prone to sleep deprivation. Audibly tired, she drones away at the clichéd questions but still has moments of spark that betray her love for her music despite her exhaustion.

Daily: You were on the scrappy bitch tour over the late summer [with Kinnie Starr and Oh Susanna.] In your words, what is a scrappy bitch?

Hille: C'mon, that was the summer! That's a persona we took up during the tour. It's not something I live with all the time.

Daily: What sound are you going after with playing the tenor guitar?

Hille: I wanted to learn an instrument that I didn't know how to play, so I thought that a guitar with four strings would be easier to play than a guitar with six strings

and I was right. I still don't know how to play a six-string. The other guys in the band do all the six-string stuff and they're good at that. I just wanted to learn something quick to rock out.

Daily: Tell me what you think about Canadian birds. It seems to be a prevalent theme in your performances and recordings.

Hille: I love them. I've always been fascinated by them....The track that's on

film. (I don't know the title of it yet). The Scrappy Bitches are going to Europe later, and I'll be touring Germany with the Rheostatics, so I'll be keeping busy.

Daily: Probably some aspiring independent rockers will be reading this. What do you have to say to them?

Hille: Do it! It's totally worth it. It's a lot of fun and a lot of work. But when I say work I smile because I just love it. I think it's better that you get in it



Veda Hille and her skilled and devoted band

Here is a Picture is actually my friend doing bird calls. I've been commissioned to write a song on Canadian bird-calls, so I'm working on that.

Daily: What's next after this tour?

Hille: I'm going back home to Vancouver to work on a few projects. I'm working on the soundtrack for a silent

without hearing about all of the distress beforehand so you just go and do it. Believe me, there's nothing better than one foot on the monitor and just rocking out.

Veda Hille will be playing at *The Yellow Door*, 3625 Aylmer on Saturday, October 30 at 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.

THE ART DUMMY

The Art of Exemption

BY JOHN ORTVED

Midterms continue their savage assault this week without relent or consideration. Last week I offered my advice on how to avoid that catchy little bug known as studying. This week I'm offering up another option to those of us who aren't on board for that whole 'studying' thing; forget studying and procrastinating, way too much work, just avoid midterms all together. That's right, find any possible way to get out of them. Please don't try this for more than one midterm each semester - save it for the one you're dreading the most. Also, abusing the art of creative exemptions can also lead to suspicion by the powers that be, and you know God wants you to graduate. So don't overdo it.

The following is my compilation of suggestions for what I consider to be viable and practical self-imposed exemptions. There is no guarantee with these suggestions and certainly no money-back guarantee. My God, you're not even paying for this paper. But hey, what have you got to lose? The following may not get you exempted, they may just get you a zero, but you'll have a good story to go with it, not to mention an A for effort. Most of this won't get you an immediate exemption; it will probably take months and months of therapy sessions and an Oscar winning performance to convince Dr. Freud that you were indeed too stressed/crazy to be writing the exam in the first place.

Don't show up. Show up drunk. Show up high. Vomit on the prof. Vomit on the TA. Ask questions out loud. Give away answers. Talk

loudly with the person next to you, then blame him for cheating. Elbow the student next to you repeatedly in the head. Jolt his arm each time he goes to fill in the little o's for multiple choice. Have a seizure. Pull a gun (a fake gun, but one that looks real). Distribute pornography with each essay book. Bring your pet bobcat. Bring your bear. Cut off your arms. Tuck your arms into your T-shirt so it looks like you cut off your arms. Wear your hockey pads and hip check anyone who comes in late. Start a fight club. Break dance. Slam dance. Start a mosh pit. Start pogoing. Make fart noises, then laugh out loud, then wait silently for the attention you crave like heroin. Recite lines from *Goodfellas*. Quote *Chilly Willy*. Doodle white supremacist slogans then hand it in. Burn a tattoo into your arm (the effect of the smell of burning flesh on the average professor is exceptional). Wear a helmet. Wear a space-suit. Wear nothing. Write the essay about your pet dog at home. Write the essay in that tribal African language comprised of clicking noises. Write the essay in blood. Come in late, then fall down the stairs on your way to receive your exam, breaking several bones in full view of the whole class. Light up. Light the person next to you (sit beside someone wearing a fleece. Patagonia and North Face ignite quite nicely).

Good luck to all you brave souls heading into the valley of death in this next week. I hope it is quick and painless. For those forward thinking individuals who had the foresight and organization to study, I hope I sit next to you.

The story of Teena Brandon

Kimberly Pierce's Boys Don't Cry is an engrossing and poignant movie

BY SARAH COHEN

Boys Don't Cry is the true story of Teena Brandon, or Brandon Teena. The personal pronoun that will be used to designate this character depends on how the spectator will perceive his/her identity.

Teena Brandon is a girl who always wanted to be a boy. It isn't just a teenager's fantasy or tomboy behavior. Since she was young, Teena has had this deep conviction that behind her female body, everything was truly masculine. She wants to think and act like a boy, and so she does. Therefore, let's call her a "he," in that she strongly believes, and succeeds, in this masculine embodiment.

Filmmaker Kimberly Pierce is a graduate student at Columbia University and had been working on a thesis script about female Civil War spy who had posed as a man. Then she first read about Brandon Teena. Fascinated by identity issues, she decided to make a movie out of this true

story. It happened in late 1993, in a small rural American town called Falls City, Nebraska. Brandon Teena is a newcomer who has fled Lincoln, and left his criminal past and feminine identity behind him. Free and now anonymous, he tries to lead an exciting and new life. His charming personality helps his acceptance into a group of youths that hang out all night in a derelict house where baby, mother and daughter drink beers for breakfast. Though Brandon is tame, the revelation of his real identity raises a strong feeling of anger.

However, Kimberly Pierce did not want homosexuality and the crisis of identity to be the main topic of the movie. Besides, we hear Brandon saying at the beginning that he is not a "fag." He is deeply convinced he is a guy, so the transformation from girl to boy is just barely tackled. As both director and screenwriter, Kimberly Pierce wanted to emphasize the intense love story that starts to grow between Brandon and Lana,

the most popular but lost soul girl of Falls City. The truth was that Brandon is a young and cute guy, a playful rebel but a loyal friend and an irresistible romancer with ladies.

This was Pierce's most successful angle in *Boys Don't Cry*. Hilary Swank (Brandon and Carly Molloy in *90210*) plays a complex role. With her short hair she is constantly conscious of the masculine way of walking, successfully embodying this charming and fascinating character. Hilary Swank worked hard to play the role. She spent six weeks doing vocal training to deepen her voice and worked out with a trainer to sculpt her physique into a lean, muscular shape. The result is an angelic face and an irresistible smile, which make us understand why the lost Lana (Chloe Sevigny) falls in love with him. The question of identity is then the core of their love story. Only Lana will offer him what he has always dreamed of—to be loved for what he



Scene from Boys Don't Cry

thinks he is.

Through the skillful eye of her camera, Kimberly Pierce has depicted the stark backdrop of rural America. The two guys who kill Brandon are some utterly disturbed men who have always been living in the town of Falls City. Their deep intolerance against non-conformism is cleverly underlined and

opposes the initial enthusiasm raised by Brandon's arrival. However, he breaks the rules of conformity and becomes a threat to the brittle equilibrium of their countrylife. The anger toward Brandon

produce a fear. Living day to day in a violent world of drinking and drugging bullies, they are afraid of things overwhelming them.

Boys Don't Cry is a movie full of emotion. Images are strong and absorbing. Characters are lifelike. The talented Kimberly Pierce avoids stereotypes and also manages to raise questions in the spectator's mind.



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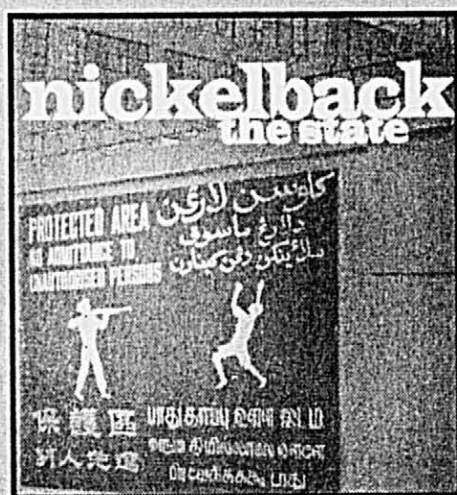
production design: RON SPURLES stage manager: SIMON JOYNS assistant stage manager: Kieran Keller set and costume designer: PETER HARTWELL lighting designer: GUY SIMARD
stage crew: JOE COBBEN / DANIEL GUYERIN / CAROLYN HETHERINGTON / BRENDA ROBINS

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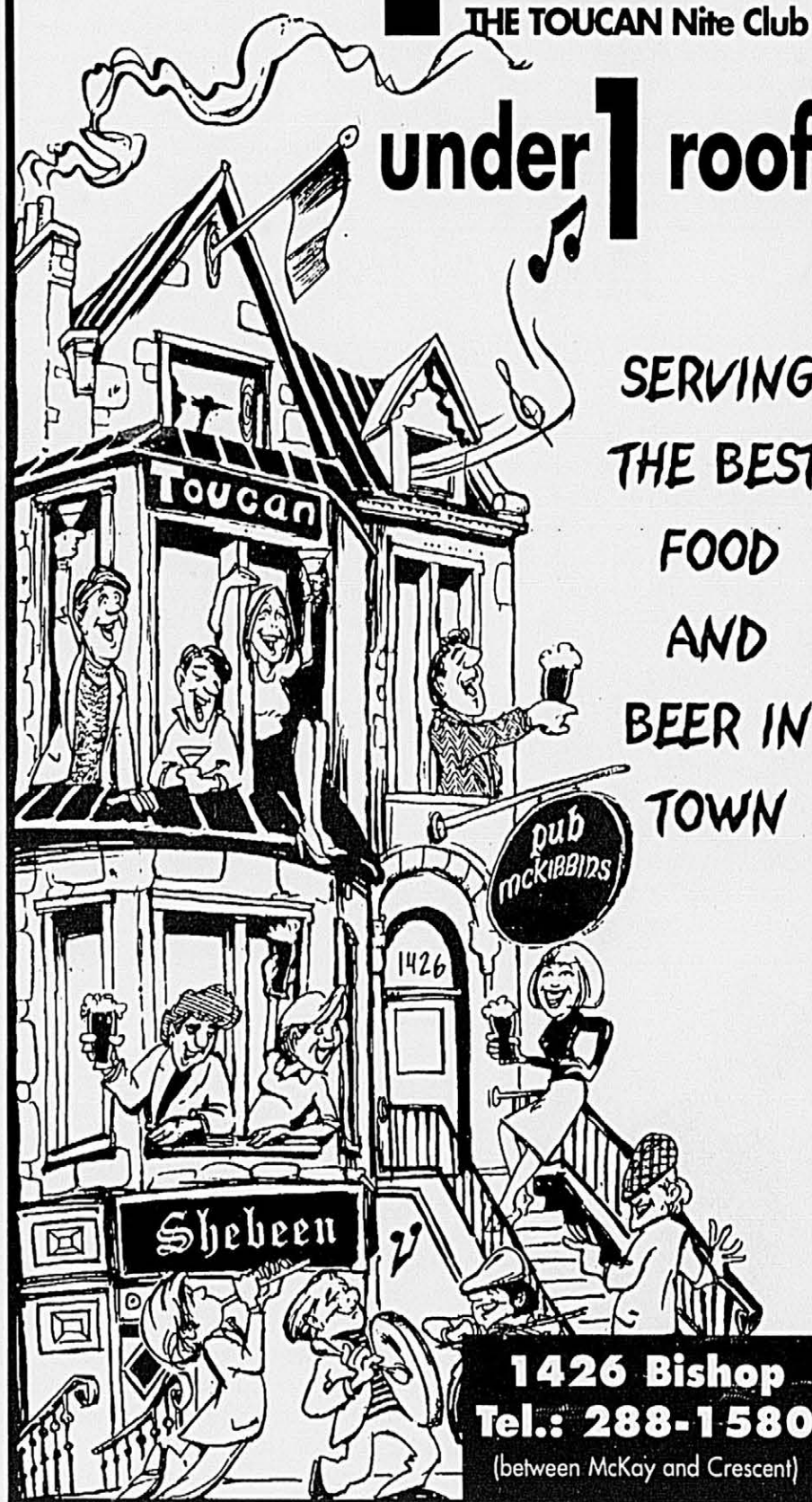
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Getting "Closer" to the Meaning of Love

A new play in McGill Players' Theatre explores the darker side of love

BY CLAIRE COOPER

When speaking about their new play, directors Talia Hoffstein and Kareem Fahmy are enthusiastic and confident.

They have good reason to be, as *Closer* is a great play. All of the cast members give excellent performances in this compelling chronicle of four individuals over a period of four years that witness the evolution and degeneration of the characters' notions of intimacy, love and the sexual politics surrounding infidelity. Fahmy was quick to point out that when he and Hoffstein were looking for material for a fall production with the McGill Players' Theatre they "wanted something new, modern, hip and urban."

Closer is more than just a look at life in the 90s through a Generation-X lens. The well-developed complexity of the characters salvages the play from such a simplistic portrayal: *Closer* deals with subject matter that is neither new nor different but its approach is humorously frank and the sharp dialogue delivered without flaw draws you in and makes the play unique.

Closer follows the encounters of Dan (Michael Albert) an obituary writer who laments forgotten dreams of writing his own fiction; Alice (Lucie O'Brien), an ex-stripper turned drifter who is searching for a sense of belonging; Anna (Sarah Mayes), a photographer who seeks an idealized vision of love that thwarts her potential for

true happiness; and Larry (Nick Kovacs), a dermatologist who yearns for intimacy.

When Dan meets Alice in the opening scene, he is immediately attracted by her unabashed charm and wit. She is a talented flirt and is able to captivate Dan's attention without revealing much of herself, although she gives the illusion that her intriguing past is an open book. When we next encounter the couple, they are living together and Dan has finished his first novel based in part on Alice's life. At this time, Dan meets and falls in love with Anna who refuses his advances because he is already involved. Dan inadvertently brings Anna and Larry together through a funny episode resulting from a conversation in an internet chat room.

The scene in which Larry and Anna meet exemplifies one of the play's many strengths - the chemistry between the actors. Although all four of the characters are connected and meet each other throughout the play, the dialogue is strongest between Larry and Anna, and Dan and Alice. The two couples banter well-written lines with an ease that makes their characters believable and appealing. Alice and Larry are the most intriguing of the characters and their refusal to apologize or make excuses for their vices and weaknesses make them more inviting than Anna and Dan who expose their vulnerabilities with regret and guilt.

Although the characters of Anna and Dan are less engrossing, Mayes and Albert give strong performances. Mayes plays Anna with an effective intensity that causes you to empathize with her emotional struggles. Albert is both earnest and witty. His character repeats his mistakes and makes you want him to finally get it right this time. Larry's character is most open. We are not asked to guess at the different facets of his personality as they are shown to us. Nick Kovacs is outstanding in his portrayal of a man who is sincere and loving at one moment, yet cruelly sarcastic and vulgar the next. Lucie O'Brien gives a powerful performance that is particularly haunting and emotionally wrenching in her final scene. You are left to re-evaluate her character and to see her as much more vulnerable than originally suspected.

Closer is not a play that banks its appeal on flash. The set for the production reflects this. The backdrop is made up of white walls hung with Anna's photographs. A video screen at the centre of the walls that flashes the title of each scene and acts as a computer monitor on which Larry and Dan communicate in a chat room. The set effectively utilizes the small and intimate theatre. A more elaborate set would have been cluttered.

Originally a British production, *Closer* has recently become a hit on Broadway and will soon arrive in other cities as well.



The cast of the play.

The play takes a humorous yet stark look at love and relationships. It appeals to those more interested in character and story than mindless entertainment. Directors Hoffstein and Fahmy have succeeded in bringing a great script to life.

Closer will be playing October 27-30 and November 2-5 at 8:00 p.m. at the McGill Players' Theatre, 3rd Floor Shatner Building. For reservations, call 398-6813.

Festival Packs a Punch

Multimedia event is on the cutting edge

BY ALEX AYLETT

The venue looks like an old ballroom converted into a war-time warehouse. Scaffolding is mounted towards the ceiling, accompanied by supporting lights, speakers and a large projection screen. Grapefruit-sized bare-bulb lights pulse in random patterns to the subtle bass-heavy music. In the dim light, the faces of computer technicians glow an eerie blue. A black light spotlights a crystal chandelier. People sit or mill, not knowing what to expect. This strange mix of old and new is what the new media component of the Festival International de Nouveau Cinéma et Nouveaux Médias is all about.

Kojiro Umezaki's *Extradimensional* was a performance piece written for traditional

Japanese flute, accompanied by simple computer tones and projected images. A room filled with people watching white rectangles on computer screens modulate to digital music, live flute and projected train footage don't fit into any of my preconceived categories of art or culture. The computer modulations began to match and compliment the score played by the flutist. The motion and colour of the music (not the computerized sheen usually associated with the high-tech, but with the slight discord and harmony of jazz) complements the footage of overlapping images.

Afasia, a robot- and computer-assisted one-man show by Marcel-Li Antunez Roca, was billed as a multimedia re-interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey* - yet another rehashing of the old classic. Roca emerged, wearing shorts, a metal and a plastic exoskeleton of wires, tubes and computer sensors. His movements were controlled by an army of computer muscle. With this he presented an *Odyssey* so intense that it became our own. He walked through computerized and filmed landscapes, sacked Troy, sailed the seas, fought monsters and returned home all on a 20-foot stage. The term "multi-media" lost meaning 5 minutes into the show. "This is my *Odyssey*," he said after the performance. "I relate to these challenges, to this story." Despite the gadgets, the robots and the computers it was his: real, funny and human.



Afasia

The final night, which brought together seven different artists, DJs, and VJs was supposed to be the big blow out. But the \$21 ticket charge, lots of people turned away at the door and computer problems in the second half made the evening a disappointment. Still, the opening performance, *SoundPictureIII* by Mark van Heon, made the night worthwhile. Sampling from music videos ranging from Miles Davis to The Carpenters, he mixed and scratched like a normal DJ, while projecting the footage from which the sounds were taken. Slipping Björk in with Miles Davis was a great idea. Why hadn't anybody thought of that before?

The cold precision of computers which seems to be slipping into pop-culture used to worry me. Well-crafted soundbites, beats, samples and images seemed to be sucking human nature out of art, but these shows eased my mind. What must be remembered is that there's no such thing as a good or bad medium - only good or bad art.



Umezaki

Concert Review

Natalie Merchant at the Spectrum

BY GABE FLORES

P rancing around the stage in an all-black outfit may have been Natalie Merchant's idea of a birthday gift to the audience.

Only after the first few numbers, including the title track from her last album, *Ophelia*, was the crowd in its comfort zone. She worked her charm with the audience, sharing anecdotes from her childhood in New York and experiences with Bob Dylan. However, the show only got under way after the techies tweaked the sound on Natalie's vocals and cleaned up a muddled sound. Banter peppered the audience throughout the performance as Merchant received gifts from audience members, ranging from a lone leopard-skin glove to a children's book. "This is almost as useful as my French,"



Natalie Merchant sings at the Spectrum.

said Merchant about the book, from which she decided to read an entire passage, adding several colorful adjectives along the way. Anchored by both a drummer and percussionist, Merchant's five-piece band was patient with her drunken antics as they exchanged blank expressions and polite laughter - a sign that they were used to all the shenanigans. Well into a solo career, Merchant's performance offered a glimpse into this musical diva's genius and drinking habits.



Natalie Merchant leans on her piano.

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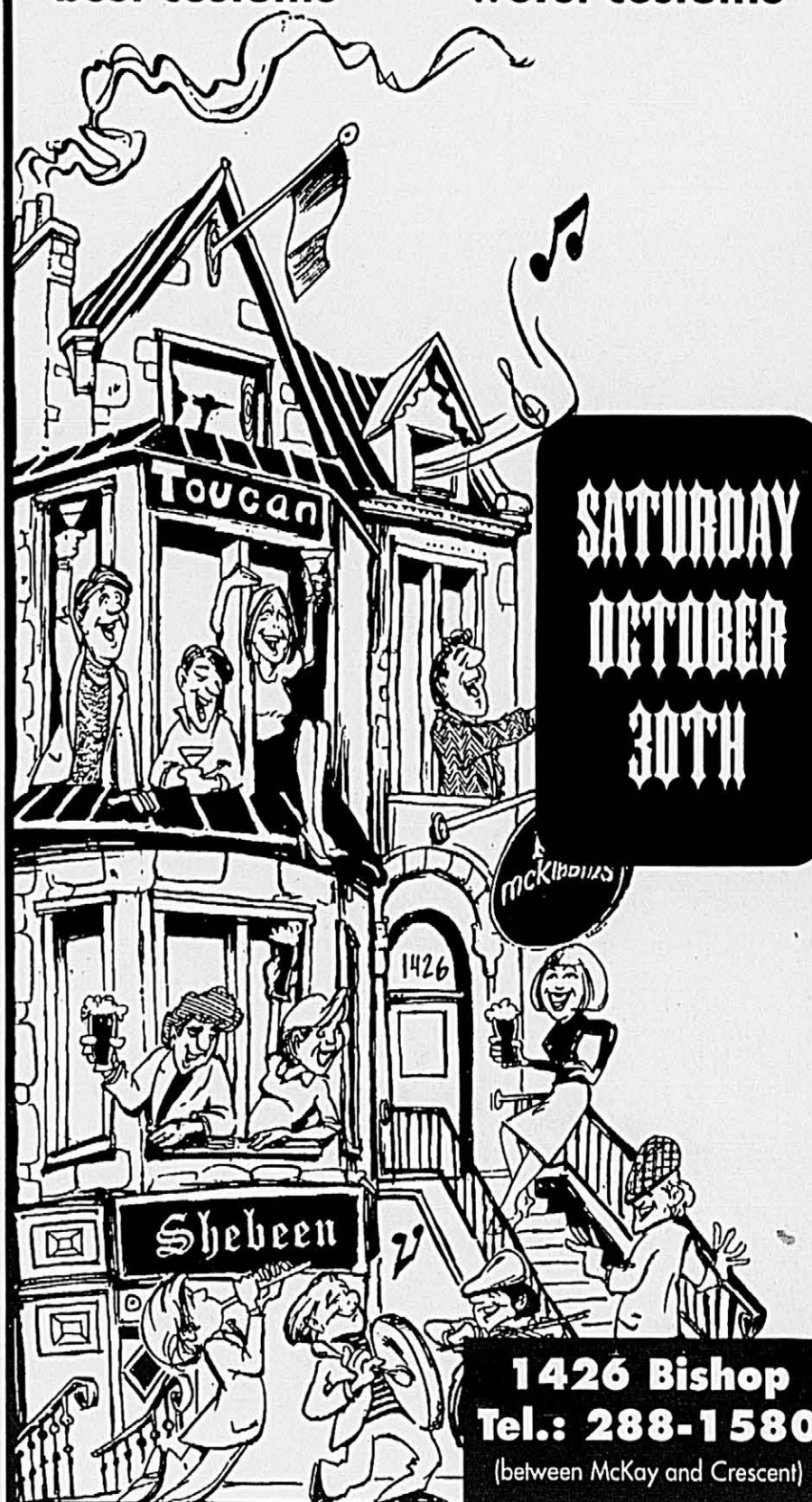
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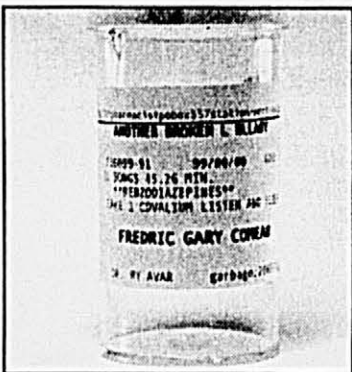
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ANOTHER BROKEN LULLABY
FREDRIC GARY COMEAU
 (Independent)

How the fuck was I supposed to know
 That you were callin' it a day
 There are a million things I never said
 I guess you wanted it that way
 -"Morning Song"

Vic Chesnutt fans take note. Fredric Gary Comeau is here to fill the niche of a melancholic, drown-your-sorrows-in-alcohol artist. His debut album features a stripped-down sound that reinforces the poet-cum-singer's moodiness. With the consistency of a droning man down on his luck, Comeau's musical misery has a dignified beauty to it. With little variation in chord progression and a constant tempo that anchors Comeau's lyrics, "Another Broken Lullaby" is the music of a travelling hobo during the train-hopping days of the depression of the 1990s. "I've been drinking way too much/ to pretend I believe" echoes some of the remedies we all use to mend a broken heart or, at the very least, loneliness.
 -GABE FLORES

Fredric Gary Comeau plays at Jailhouse Rock Café (30 Mont-Royal W.) on October 30 at 4-p.m.



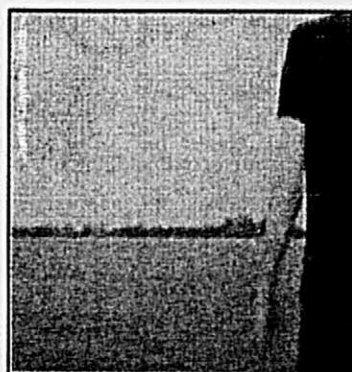
JUSTIN CLAYTON
LIMB
 (Ultimatum Music)

"I never meant to make a solo record. It just happened."
 -Justin Clayton

If I had to describe this album in 22 words, I'd like to think these are not the ones I'd use: "[The album] is an individual musical journey...a monologue of unresolved feelings which center around nothing-yet everything." And if I were Justin Clayton I'd feel the same way about being quoted as saying, "I respond musically to anything that moves me, regardless of who or what it is....It's the desire to write a melody which vibrates inside me, like how a bass or drum do."

In the first 17 seconds of the first track it is obvious that the desire to write Thom Yorke's melodies vibrate a bit stronger inside Clayton. By some strange coincidence the first 15 seconds of Clayton's "Just like you" and the first fifteen seconds of Radiohead's "Karma Police" are almost identical. Clayton slows it down a tiny bit but the first time I heard it I could've sworn he had spliced in the intro to "Karma Police" at the beginning of his song. With such blatant copyright infringement upon the original work of Thom Yorke and Radiohead one wonders why Justin didn't go all out and officially cover Radiohead songs. Justin justifies this by saying, "I can only sing my own lyrics." Oh, well then.

-JONAH GINDIN



BLACK ON BOTH SIDES
MOS DEF
 (EMI)

Hip-hop culture has reached the crossroads where Mr. Mos Def has clearly made his statement for progress. His latest release, *Black on Both Sides*, is an honest album filled with original beats and samples, soulful singing, and a powerful flow. It is also another important contribution to the next movement in hip-hop culture. This movement is a declaration of hip-hop for the people and strongly recognizes the roots of hip-hop. It is an effort at honesty and soul over the materialism that is usually associated with rap music.

Major players such as The Roots, Dugable Planets and the Rawkus Records Crew may seem more conservative when preaching responsibility, street smarts and self-respect but their music is hardly traditional. While respecting the past, there is another revolution that is breaking with the same old routine and progressing the music.

The beats throughout the album are surprising, using silence along with repeated sampling to create an unpredictable, layered background that most MCs cannot boast. There is also an unexpected amount of singing done by Mos Def himself, such as on the reflective "Climb" featuring Vinia Mojica and Umi Says. While he may not be Pavarotti, he sings with soul. Hard to ignore and remarkably beautiful.

Apart from a couple of softer songs, Def's album is pretty hard-hitting. Songs like "Know That" featuring Talib Kweli, "Mr. Nigga" featuring Q-Tip and "Rock n' Roll" are an interesting commentary and Whiteification is an interesting parody of black American music and doesn't make any apologies to society as a whole or the rap music scene in particular. No, this isn't a Puff-Daddy-Mase reunion. *Black on Both Sides* is the latest in a rebirth of hip-hop music and should reignite some hope in those who had given up on the hip-hop nation.

-JOHN WOODSIDE



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